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Marilyn's New Role

Friday, Feb. 17, 1961

Norma Jean Mortenson is only 34, but she can well remember the revulsion that used to be the almost universal reaction to ills of the mind. Her mother was in and out of mental hospitals, and Norma Jean was made to feel deeply ashamed of it. Now psychiatrists campaign to persuade the public to drop the word insanity and call it "mental illness," and to regard it as no more of a reflection on the patient than heart disease. But not all of the public is yet ready to accept this view.

Last week America's No. 1 glamour girl was stricken with mental illness. Norma Jean Mortenson, better known as Marilyn Monroe, had herself admitted to Manhattan's famed Payne Whitney Psychiatric Clinic, part of the New York Hospital-Cornell Medical Center. After four days she was discharged, "improved" —for a trip across town to Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center. There, besides a rest and checkup, Marilyn was to continue intensive psychiatric treatment.

Though psychiatrists, true to medical ethics and the confidential patient-doctor relationship, refused to tell precisely what ailed Marilyn, it was no secret that she had long been in psychoanalysis. It was easy to see how, while her personality was being disassembled and reconstructed, the strain of recent events could have become too great for her.

Marilyn's childhood (TIME cover, May 14, 1956) was so traumatic that Freud could have developed half his theories from her case history alone. Her teen-age marriage was a failure. So was a 1954 marriage to Yankee Star Joe Di Maggio. After that, while married to Playwright Arthur Miller, Marilyn tried to have a baby. One pregnancy had to be aborted to save her life,

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and at least one other ended in miscarriage. Other blows followed. After her latest movie, *The Misfits*, was finished, her friend and co-star Clark Gable died. And last month she got a divorce from Miller.

Professionally, Marilyn was a year-after-year success. Instead of bringing her contentment, this subjected her to the stresses of fame. A wonderfully funny comedienne in earlier movies, she went on in *Misfits* to show herself a talented serious actress, but the part that exiting Husband-Author Miller gave her in that movie was modeled painfully on her own inner problems. Going out on the town again in recent weeks with Di Maggio ("I'm delighted to find that he is still a good friend") can have done little to calm the inner conflict. Payne Whitney, which does not take cases that it thinks hopeless, admitted her a few days later. In seeking help, she may have done more than the psychiatrists to win popular acceptance of a more modern view of mental illness and treatment for it.

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